Newspapers by ancestry
https://www.newspapers.com/image/421371661

Downloaded on Mar 27, 2024

SPIN OFF

Romantic McCaslin

One of the best folk albums of a couple of years ago was Way Out West by California singer-songwriter Marty McCaslin. **Prairie in The Sky** (Philo) is the long awaited follow up to the 1974 release.

Prairie In The Sky continues with the themes of the earlier record. The songs are mostly romantic dreams of an outlaw life on the road. One song, Cole Younger, is actually a traditional outlaw ballad from the repertoire of cowboy singer Glen Ohrlin.

Another song, The Ballad Of Weaverville, which was co-written by McCaslin and Jim Ringer, could easily pass for an authentic traditional ballad.

The moods set by some of these songs is remarkable. Particularly eerie are Stan Jones' Ghost Riders In The Sky and McCaslin's Prairie In The Sky both of which feature imaginative French horn work by David Racusen. The saddest song is Bob Simpson's Cornerstone Cowboy, the story of an old man, formerly a working cowboy. "Pretty girls and rodeos kept running through his mind/ But that was long ago and he'd forgotten how to ride."

McCaslin is a fine singer and guitarist and the backup by such musicians as Jay Ungar on fiddle, Doug McClaran on piano, Winnie Winston on pedal steel, Hugh McDonald on bass and Steve Mosley on drums is tasteful and fits perfectly.

★★★★★

Hejii Axten has made about fifteen albums in his time. His latest, **Fearless** (A&M), is a fine record and better than anything he's done in recent years.

This record is Axten's first outing with producer David Kershenbaum, the man responsible for Diamonds & Rust, the first really successful Joan Baez album in years and it seems that Kershenbaum may be in the process of earning a reputation as the next wonder producer.

Progressive country rock is the main direction of the album although the influences of traditional folk can also be felt.

The best cut is the very pretty song, Evangelina, which features the gut string lead guitar of Larry Carlton and the pedal steel of Hank DeVito.

There's also a nice version of Dylan's Lay Lady Lay, the only non-original song on the record.

— Mike Regenstreif

Original power

Motown's history over the past dozen years or so has been characterized by change. The Detroit company that gave us the Supremes, Four Tops, Smokey Robinson & the Miracles, Temptations et al, is now a corporation with rock and country labels based in Los Angeles. The expansion, say some critics, is responsible for a decline in the uniqueness of Motown's latterday releases.

Nevertheless, the company still had the good sense to let "Little" Stevie Wonder do his thing, as well as Marvin Gaye (What's Goin' On), and Motown is still at resourceful as it was when they combined florrid classical strings to those throbbing bass lines, burning backbeat, and sweet soul harmonies.

They also know how to repackage the old glorious hits, as in **Motown Original Versions**, a marvellous collection of a dozen recent hits (Please Mr. Postman, Love Is Like A Heat Wave, How Sweet It Is, etc.) done by everyone from the Carpenters to the Doobie Bros. to Linda Rondstadt to the Who. The collection is a powerful reminder of the greatness of the original records that have recharged the careers of such a wide spectrum of artistes.

★★★★★

Smokey Robinson, who left the Miracles a few years back to concentrate on company administration, has been making a comeback. His latest, **Smokey's Family Robinson** (Motown), is perfect mood music for the discoteques where he probably thinks he must infiltrate in order to sell records. Thus, he's getting into current studio effects; naturally, his musical family is top-notch and Smokey is in fine form, especially on the exquisite second side, comprised of three very low-key love songs totalling 13 minutes. The flip side is filled with discogroove material that tends to limit Smokey's vocal expressiveness, although Get Out Of Town features a very sweet and nasty delivery.

It's good to see Smokey actively making records again — he is after all a master craftsman — but one wishes he would cut through the discobull.

— Juan Rodriguez

Free-flowing jazz

In case you are a newcomer to jazz and don't know who Jim Hall is, now is your chance to discover one of the great guitarists who should be recording more often. The album is called **Jim Hall Live! (Horizon)**.

And in case you are among those who think we have no Canadian jazzmen, then get ready to sing a new tune. Don Thompson is on acoustic bass and Terry Clarke is on drums on what turns out to be one of the most pleasant trio albums in some time.

Thompson, who has been pianist with Sonny Greenwich for several years, is a very gifted musician and composer; he is also a recording engineer and is responsible for the original recording of this album. His bass work is superb.

Terry Clarke could practically cause a new assumption that Clarke is a very good name for drummers. Like the famous Kenny Clarke, he is one of those ideal drummers who can be so discrete as to barely be audible at times, and then spark up and push a rhythm on with irresistible authority.

The album was recorded live at George's Bourbon Street in Toronto, and the trio is perceptibly happy and at ease. The tunes are by no means new: Angel Eyes, 'Round Midnight, Scrapple From The Apple, The Way You Look Tonight and I Hear a Rhapsody. But if you like to hear fresh versions of standards, (I can't resist the pun) now is the time.

Hall's playing is so fine and his ideas are so free-flowing that he could make every so-called "free" guitarist sound like a mumbling fool. Hall expresses the structures of the tunes with loving consideration and then launches on his own improvisations poetically, loosely and totally unfettered.

Side 1 is tender and loving and laid back. Side 2 has a gentle drive and exhibits some well-mannered cookin'.

I recommend this album as a sound investment and I believe that whatever your musical preferences might be, you'll never tire of these sides. An added nice gesture from creative director John Snyder is the transcription of Jim Hall's solo on The Way You Look Tonight. Guitarists, enjoy!

—Nighthawk

Montreal rock group April Wine, with drummer Jerry Mercer

April Wine's platinum album rewards Mercer for 17 years

Rock & Pop

by Juan Rodriguez

When you mention his age, Jerry Mercer breaks into laughter and says, "Yeah, I must be the world's oldest teenybopper!"

At 30, Mercer's been playing in Montreal rock 'n' roll bands for the past 17 years — and only now is he on the verge of 'making it' with the group April Wine.

The funny thing is, he looks younger, healthier and more beautiful than his compatriots in the quartet. With his bronzed face, framed by a neatly clipped beard and crowned by curls, he looks positively cherubic.

It's been a long time comin'. Mercer says he's played in eight bands over these years, including five years with Trevor Payne, short-lived successes with Triangle and Manhmakhan, and, after three years with April Wine, there is now some light at the end of the tunnel.

April Wine has just released its sixth, and most ambitious, album, entitled The Whole World's Goin' Crazy; this is a group that has developed to the point where it can now live down its high-volume bubble-gum image without losing any of their fans, and this is the album that does it.

The disc had 100,000 advance orders, only the third time — after Beau Dommage and BTO — that a Canadian album has "shipped platinum." And this week, coinciding with the disc's release, the group embarked upon a three-month cross-country tour that is expected to gross over a million dollars.

The musical changes in April Wine, its increasing complexity and maturity, has had a lot to do with its new international potential. And Jerry Mercer, as the experienced hand of the group, has had a lot to do with those changes.

"We've all expressed the desire to change," he says. "Some two ago we were even talking about changing the name. You see, this group has always had to work hard under pressure as far as writing goes — we've always been behind the gun. we need the album, we need something commercial, we need a hit, we gotta get hustling — all of these criteria have been very tight on us.

"Myles Goodwyn, as the principal songwriter, had been feeling this more than anybody else. Now he's writing things that are more meaningful to him personally and I think it's a good move. If he can divorce himself from all those other things and do something he personally digs, well, it may well open him up to writing something 'commercial' without him even forcing it."

Such has obviously occurred with The Whole World's Goin' Crazy. Ask Jerry if his experience has had a steadying influence over this group and he smiles again and says:

"I think it's blend right now and I think it works. Sometimes my being able to, let's say, remain quiet over a situation that shakes everybody up, has a somewhat calming effect. But there are times when the boat needs to be rocked, and so they move me. If you're working to keep something driving along at high energy, then you've got to pour a lot into it, you can't be passive all the time. And, you know, sometimes I can get really passive."

Mercer's personal musical tastes lean towards modern jazz and this, too, adds a dimension to the group.

"Basically, I am into jazz and rhythm 'n' blues while Myles has been into rock. When we think musically, it all comes from different directions and so we have to try to blend and find common denominators. It's kinda interesting.

"I realize that when you're cutting records and making commercial music, you have to simplify a great deal, you have to keep that basic groove that people can hop to. But being able to function in that 'freer state' from time to time lightens up one's chop sufficiently so that when you do the simpler stuff it's that much better."

The new record is considerably better than any of the other April Wine discs; it features some cameo performances by Frankie Marino and Dwayne Ford among others, and for the first time the band is getting extensive FM-rock radio airplay. The group is now ready to be a contender on the U.S. and international scene. And that, as Jerry Mercer knows so well, is a big step.

"The growth of the number of French bands here has made the local scene that much more competitive."

Thus, local groups led by April Wine are beginning to establish an identity of their own, instead of trying to live in the shadows of American group's achievements.

"I don't think as individuals, inside their own heads, the musicians work in the shadows. But in the public's eye there's a definite shadow and it's hard to beat."

Mercer, and April Wine, stand a good chance to beat the odds. Maybe Mercer even will be recognized as one of the tastiest power drummers around.

Canadian Equity goes it alone

Theatre Notes

By Julia Maskoulis

The Canadian branch of Actors' Equity Association, a union representing professional actors, became independent of its head office in the United States this week.

On April 1, the new organization became Canadian Actors' Equity Association, to separate it from its American counterpart.

The move to separate was made by referendum of AEA members three years ago, but took a long time to formalize so that no unpleasant feelings would result, said Barnard Chadwick, executive secretary of AEA in Toronto.

"This could have been a very emotional issue, but this is in their (U.S. Equity) best interests as well as ours," he said.

The man credited with the most of the maneuvering is Theodore Bikel, AEA president, who waited until the right time so it could be settled amicably, said Chadwick.

Although reasons for the separation, which will retain an open door policy between Canada and the United States, are both pragmatic and ethereal, the main one is the changing economics of theatre in Canada.

In a speech to be given Monday by Bikel at a celebration formally launching the union, he says, "Whether the fears are real or imaginary matters little when Equity members still cannot rid themselves of the notion that New York has to be asked for permission each time you want to go to the bathroom."

Where Equity's jurisdiction extended to a score or so managements a decade ago, it now covers more than 100 with 2,000 active members among performers and persons involved in stage management. Working conditions, hours, safety, discipline and minimum wages are the union's concern.

Separation from the United States association means that Canadians will be running their own affairs, handling their own budget, setting their own rules and operating under their own contracts without the need for formal approval of the New York office.

Much of the benefit will be on the administrative side through cutting of red tape. In the past, for example, the Canadian branch needed approval from New York to buy property, something that no longer will be necessary.

Canada, he proceeds to explain, is working hard to rid itself of the "big brother" syndrome of dependency and cultural domination by its southern neighbor.

"The growth in the U.S. since 1955 has been marginal, but in English theatre in Canada it has been exceptional. There are now 850 working actors in any given week," says Frank Hogg, a member of AEA's Toronto office.

In contrast, growth in the U.S., he says, has been confined to urban centres, and then specifically to the eastern coast, mushrooming out of New York.

What will the change mean for the Canadian actor, who is not looking for work? "The members will really see very little change," explains Hogg. "It isn't the kind of a change that we are aiming for.

"There will still be the same employment opportunities for the performing artists and he will still be able to work in the U.S."

But so far, the goals of the new Canadian Equity remain vague, seemingly having been satisfied in a new name and a new-found independence. There are no concrete changes planned; the "amicable separation" appears to extend no further than to point out that the "gentleman's agreement" that worked quite well when Canada was only a little brother, got into the way of its adolescence as it got definitely bigger, and perhaps even more . . . competitive!

* * *

The **Becket Players** of Pierrefonds are making their second appearance this year with Way Off Broadway '76, a combination variety show and musical based on cupsuled versions of Oklahoma and Brigadoon. "The show, which is on April 2, 3, 9 and 10 at Pierrefonds Comprehensive High School, will include some audience participation. The first 650 people to arrive will see the two musicals in the auditorium while the latecomers are taken to the cataret for a drink and the variety show. Then the tables are reversed. A late night of dancing after the show is also planned.

* * *

The **Actor's Studio** is staging Georg Buchner's controversial play Woyzeck starting on April 8. The play is based on the case of Franz Christian Woyzeck, a soldier executed in Leipzig in 1824 for murdering his mistress in a fit of jealousy. The case was well publicized since it was the first public execution in Leipzig in over 30 years.

* * *

Le Nouvelle Compagnie Theatrale opened their annual midnight studio play this week. J'accuse ma peur . . . et puis je m'endors by Yves Laliberte. The play combines improvisation to reflect the players' perceptions of fear based on the script. It is directed by the playwright and is on Thursdays to Saturdays until April 17.

* * *

Canadian playwright David Freeman is working on a new play — Flytraps — scheduled to premier at the **Saidye Bronfman Centre** May 1. Freeman, whose plays Creeps, The Battering Ram and You're Gonna Be Alright Jamie Boy brought him to a national spotlight, says Flytraps is about three lonely people living in Montreal, his adopted home for the past year. The play is completed, but he is working on a revised text.

MONTREAL WEST OPERATIC SOCIETY
presents GILBERT & SULLIVAN'S
THE PIRATES of PENZANCE
WEST HILL HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM
8:30 P.M. APRIL 7 - 8 - 9 - 10th
Wed., Thurs.: $4; Fri. - Sat.: $5
RESERVATIONS: 621-2190 or 488-9094

FRANCOISE CHARTRAND PRESENTS
IN COLLABORATION WITH DANNY DEEDS
Valery and Galina
PANOV
and
Eglevsky Ballet Company
and
Full Symphony Orchestra
WED., APRIL 21st at 8:30 P.M.
TICKETS: $6, $8, $10, $12.50
NOW ON SALE AT PLACE DES ARTS and MONTREAL TRUST; P.M.
SALLE WILFRID-PELLETIER
PLACE DES ARTS, Montreal 129 (Québec), Tel: 842-2112

CFCF radio presents
TONY ORLANDO and DAWN
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 7-8 P.M.
MONTREAL FORUM
Tickets $10.50 $8.50 at the Forum Box Office & all T.M.S. outlets
Produced by Donald P. Crowell

NICOLAI PETROV
PIANIST
"DAZZLING" Globe and Mail
"BREATHTAKING" Montreal Star
"INCREDIBLE" Vancouver Sun
"FANTASTICALLY GIFTED" The Gazette
BEETHOVEN-BRAHMS
APRIL 19 at 8:30 P.M.
Tickets: $8 $7 $6 $4 $3. ON SALE: CCA 1822 Sherbrooke West, Place des Arts, Montreal Trust P.V.M.
CHARGEX 932-2234 MASTER CHARGE
SALLE WILFRID-PELLETIER

LIQUIDATION
613 OIL PAINTINGS
TWO CONVENIENT LOCATIONS
AIRPORT INN-DORVAL
Follow signs for the airport
Tel: 631-2411
QUEEN ELIZABETH HOTEL
Gateway Room
Tel: 861-3511
SATURDAY, APRIL 2 12 noon to 11 pm
SUNDAY, APRIL 4 12 noon to 7 pm
LANDSCAPES, CITY SCENES, STILL LIFES
ABSTRACTS, PORTRAITS, SEASCAPES & FLORALS
$5 to $75
FREE
A 16" x 20" or 12" x 24" oil painting valued at $35 with the purchase of any one painting size priced at $35 or higher. Selected group to choose from. Limit one per family.
ATTENTION ARTISTS! Hundreds of hand carved frames available at low, low prices.
GROUP 74 ART, Montreal

Copyright © 2024 Newspapers.com. All Rights Reserved.

Powered by Newspapers.com